

## Preliminary Indicators Show Immunizations Improving in Kansas

Preliminary data from various health sources across Kansas are showing more Kansas children are receiving immunizations, Kansas Governor Kathleen Sebelius and KDHE Secretary Roderick L. Bremby announced at a news conference held in the Governor's Office on May 17. The Governor's Blue Ribbon Task Force on Immunizations has placed a high priority on creating strategies that increase immunizations and protect Kansas children, including the 'Immunize and Win a Prize' Program KDHE launched this year.



"In Kansas, we are taking our children's health very seriously," said Gov. Sebelius. "It is critical that children receive all of their immunizations on time. Immunizations are a safe and effective way of giving children under age 2 a healthy start in life against so many devastating diseases."

The National Immunization Survey, conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) shows an increase of more than 12 percent in immunization rates among eligible Kansas children since 2002. The CDC will publish updated statistics in July. Additional state data also show improvements.

Also at the news conference, Gov. Sebelius and Secretary Bremby recognized youth who have assisted in promoting immunizations statewide. A local Topeka band, Kipper's Cradle, played a large creative role with KDHE to produce a public service announcement jingle, titled *Get Me Immunized*, that encourages Kansas parents to get their children from birth to age 2 immunized with a series of 12 basic immunizations. Kansas elementary school students assisted the band with the songs chorus. The public service announcement and the *Get Me Immunized* jingle is now being broadcast on Kansas radio and television stations along with selected cable systems.



Kipper's Cradle, a Topeka band, performs the IWP jingle – *Get Me Immunized* – at the May 17 news conference. The jingle is part of KDHE's statewide media campaign.

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"More than 37,000 babies will be born in Kansas this year that need to be immunized," Bremby said. "The 'Immunize and Win a Prize' campaign is just one more incentive to get Kansas children immunized, but the biggest incentive is having a healthy child. That's the real prize!"

Health officials recognize that several factors play a role in improving immunization rates.

"Increasing the number of vaccine providers and locations, along with ample vaccine supplies and this new outreach program are believed to be contributing factors to improving immunizations in Kansas," said Howard Rodenberg, M.D., M.P.H., director of KDHE's Division of Health.

'Immunize and Win a Prize' is a statewide campaign to improve children's immunization rates, and is managed by the Immunization Program at KDHE. The program, an expansion of a successful 10-county pilot project in 2003, is a result of recommendations from the Governor's Task Force. 'Immunize and Win a Prize' will run through September 16 across Kansas at participating Vaccine for Children (VFC) providers.

'Immunize and Win a Prize' is an incentive project that is available to all children and families who receive their children's immunizations at a participating VFC provider. The family will receive an incentive each time they bring their child between the ages of birth to 2 years old in to be immunized, and will be eligible for larger incentives if they successfully complete their primary series by age 2. Mortality rates for vaccine-preventable diseases are highest in children less than 2 years old.

A series of 12 immunizations should be administered to newborns from birth to age 2 that protect against diseases including: bacterial meningitis, diphtheria, hepatitis B, influenza, measles, mumps, pertussis, pneumococcal disease, polio, rubella, tetanus, and varicella. Additional immunizations are recommended after age 2.

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Dr. Howard Rodenberg, KDHE director of health, shares a parenting moment with KDHE Asst. Secretary Doug Farmer, his sons Elliot and Oliver, and Gov. Sebelius during a May 17 news conference to announce improvements in Kansas immunization rates, in large part due to the success of the 'Immunize and Win a Prize' campaign.

The 2003 pilot program focused on 10 counties and targeted Medicaid participants. That program exceeded its goal of increasing immunization rates by 10 percent in each participating county with improvements in immunization rates between 24 to 55 percent.

While it's still too early in the campaign to collect meaningful data on increased immunization rates tied to the statewide 'Immunize and Win a Prize' incentives project, program officials are receiving field reports from providers that they are seeing more eligible children for immunizations, and parents are asking about 'Immunize and Win a Prize' at their medical home provider or VFC provider.

"We have more than 204 providers registered, with more signing up daily," said Rodenberg. "We're extremely encouraged by their reports of immunizing more Kansas kids and fielding questions from parents about the program."

Any health care provider who wishes to sign up to participate in the 'Immunize and Win a Prize' program should contact the KDHE Immunization Program at (785) 296-3975.